



Artifact Spotlight

by Suzanne Goldberg

The Rio Vista Museum was founded in 1975 for the purpose of preserving the history and artifacts of Rio Vista for the people of Rio Vista and all visitors.

One of my favorite items in the museum is the “tule shoe,” a horseshoe designed specifically for the soft peat land that characterizes the Delta’s agricultural environment. The fertile soil was formed largely by decaying tule reeds.

While the soil is extraordinarily fertile, it is also very soft and unstable, making it difficult for large work animals. Horses would become stuck, causing them to

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Tule Shoe

Pioneers of Rio Vista

Oliver Perry Egbert

by Phil Pezzaglia

Oliver Perry Egbert was born March 16, 1827, in the state of New York. As a young boy he moved with his parents to the state of Indiana. At the age of twenty-two, Oliver, along with his brothers John and Robert, headed across the plains, arriving in Placer County in 1849. The brothers Egbert engaged in mining for just long enough to earn enough money to go into business for themselves. Their first business venture was a traveling store, which supplied goods to surrounding mining towns by means of pack mules.

In 1851 Oliver bought a herd of cattle in southern California, which he brought to the Montezuma Hills. At this time the area was virtually uninhabited. There were no fences so the cattle would just wander the area, making it as far north as Winters, on occasion. At the same time, Oliver still retained his interest in the mercantile business with his brothers.

When the Central Pacific railroad started building operations statewide, Mr. Egbert became a partner in the firm that supplied the labor force to build the railroad. During this time he continued to reside on his ranch in Solano County.

He helped to organize Swamp Land Districts No. 7 and No. 308, as well as Reclamation District No. 536. He was a pioneer in the reclamation work in the tule lands around the area. He saw those areas as valuable grazing land as well as good fertile soil for farming. He became the largest landowner in District 536, eventually serving two terms as a district trustee.

During the early years, when the use of dredgers for reclamation purposes became a common and expensive practice, Egbert contributed greatly towards the work and extended liberal credit to those managing the reclamation enterprise.

Amongst all of his business dealings, Mr. Egbert managed to find time to conduct a general merchandise business in Rio Vista for sixteen years, having started it in the mid-1880s.

Oliver took Miss Lena Wahlin as his bride in February of 1862. The couple had five children, two sons; Elbert “Eggie” (1879–1958) and Milton; and three daughters, Cornelia, Mrs. H.W. Butler, and Mrs. S. Kirby. Rio Vista’s old Baseball Park, dedicated April 27, 1958, on St. Francis Way was named Egbert Field in memory of Elbert “Eggie” Egbert.

Mr. Oliver Perry Egbert died of blood poisoning on November 3, 1902, at the age of 75, finding his final resting place in the Masonic and Odd Fellows’ Cemetery. The citizens of the area, at the time of his death, described him as a gentleman who was noted for his honesty and consideration for others. Mrs. Lena Egbert passed away in 1927.

Starvation Days A Prisoner of War Diary

As Memorial Day nears, this is a good time to think again about the many sacrifices made by the men and women who have served in our country's armed forces. Those who have given their lives quickly come to mind, as do those who have suffered wounds, both visible and invisible. Another group who made tremendous sacrifices were those who spent months or years in prison camps. George Nelson was one of those brave men.

George Nelson was born in Sweden. He came to the United States when he was a young boy and moved to Rio Vista with his family as a teenager. He joined the Marines in 1940 at the age of 19. He spent time in China and the Philippines. While fighting on the island of Corregidor, George was hit in the foot by shrapnel in April 1942. After Corregidor fell to the Japanese, George spent close to two years in prison camps in the Philippines. He was sent to a Japanese military prison camp at the site of a copper mine in April 1944. After working there a few months, he was transferred to another prison work camp. *Starvation Days* is the diary that George kept during his time in Japan.

As suggested by the title, the overwhelming theme of George's days was hunger. The prisoners had barely enough food to allow them to work in the mines. The entries paint a bleak picture of constant hunger and disease.

George survived those bleak, starvation days. When he finally arrived back in San Francisco in October 1945, he spent eight months in a naval hospital. He remained in the Marine Corps until 1962. He returned to Rio Vista, where he lived until his death in 2004, at the age of 83. Friends who knew him said that he never went anywhere without food in his car.

The Rio Vista Museum has a display dedicated to George Nelson. There are also uniforms of other Rio Vistans who served in the military. *Starvation Days* is available for purchase at the museum as well.



George Nelson display

Memorials

On behalf of the Rio Vista Museum, we would like to thank those who have made a memorial donation in the past year in honor of their loved ones.

The following were so honored:

Eleanor Azevedo
Toby Beaver
Arelyn G. Cumberland
William E. (Ted) Dunbar
Alyne Deussenberry
Robert Deussenberry

If you haven't yet sent in your 2015 membership dues, please do so now. Remember that the museum depends on dues and donations.

panic and thrash and sometimes injure themselves or the men working them. It fell to the Chinese immigrant workers to invent a shoe that would prevent this from happening.

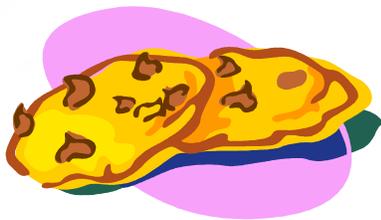
The first tule shoes were made of ash planks, about 10 inches long and 8 inches wide with thick webbing made from woven tules. These were attached to the horses' front hooves with special studs. The idea was to distribute the weight over a larger area, much like snowshoes. Once the horses learned to maneuver these awkward appendages, they could indeed work more efficiently in the soft peat. The design was refined, and an iron shoe, approximately 12 inches across, attached to a regular horseshoe, became the standard.

Interestingly, the Chinese have not always been credited with this invention. White celery farmers in southern California borrowed the idea for their "peat shoes," but it was the Chinese who originated the design, one of their many contributions to the development of the Delta's agricultural economy.

Make sure you take a look at this tule shoe and the other horseshoes on display the next time you visit the museum.

Note: An important source of information for this article was Richard Steven Street's *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913*, Stanford University Press, 2004.

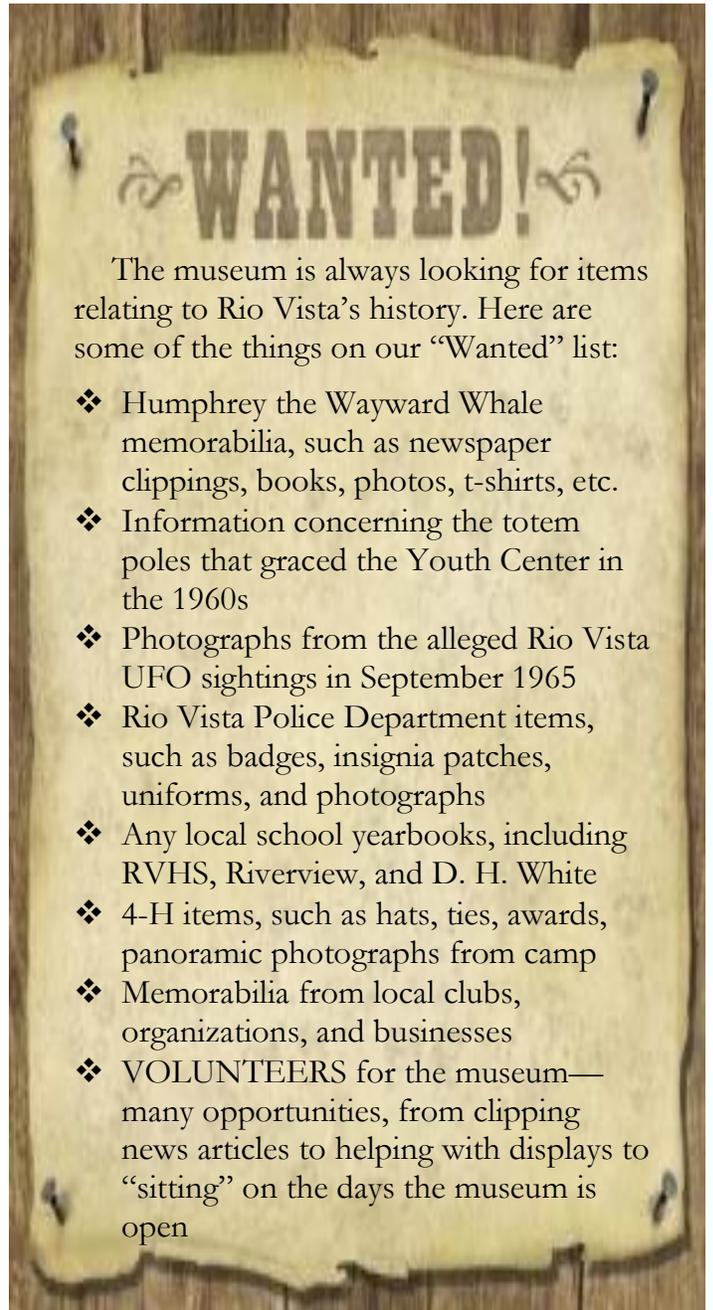
HAMBURGER
FEED
MAY 18th
Desserts needed



Rio Vista Third Thursdays!

A great time to come downtown and support our local merchants. And now you can visit the museum as well.

Open 4 pm – 7 pm



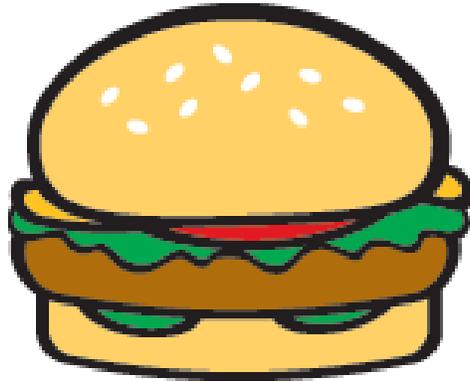
The museum is always looking for items relating to Rio Vista's history. Here are some of the things on our "Wanted" list:

- ❖ Humphrey the Wayward Whale memorabilia, such as newspaper clippings, books, photos, t-shirts, etc.
- ❖ Information concerning the totem poles that graced the Youth Center in the 1960s
- ❖ Photographs from the alleged Rio Vista UFO sightings in September 1965
- ❖ Rio Vista Police Department items, such as badges, insignia patches, uniforms, and photographs
- ❖ Any local school yearbooks, including RVHS, Riverview, and D. H. White
- ❖ 4-H items, such as hats, ties, awards, panoramic photographs from camp
- ❖ Memorabilia from local clubs, organizations, and businesses
- ❖ VOLUNTEERS for the museum—many opportunities, from clipping news articles to helping with displays to "sitting" on the days the museum is open

MUSEUM OFFICERS
AND DIRECTORS

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Suzanne Goldberg	Newsletter Editor
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Rio Vista Museum Hamburger BBQ



Donation: \$7.00

Date: Monday, May 18, 2015

Time: 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Place: 401 Club, 401 Montezuma Street

Tickets available at the Door or at the RV Museum

Rio Vista Museum
16 N. Front Street
Rio Vista, CA 94571

